

Nadler: End the War in Afghanistan and Bring our Troops Home Now

Thursday, 17 February 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) reiterated his longstanding call for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. During debate on the House floor, he spoke in support of an amendment he offered, along with Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Pete Stark (D-CA), to the Continuing Resolution for FY 2011.

"We are debating on this floor hundreds of budget cuts - cuts that will grievously hurt millions of Americans - in order to reduce our expenditures by less than \$100 billion," said Nadler. "Yet we are throwing \$100 billion a year - plus countless lives - down a drainpipe, for no useful purpose at all, and with very little discussion of our purposes and whether or policy matches our purposes….It is time to bring U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan to a close and to bring our troops home."

The following is Nadler's floor statement, as prepared:

"Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment at the desk. Amendment number 232. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer this amendment with the gentlewoman from California, Ms. Lee, and the gentleman from California, Mr. Stark.

"This Continuing Resolution provides more than \$157 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. That is \$157.8 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of that amount, approximately \$100 billion is for DOD operations in Afghanistan.

"Our amendment states that NOT more than \$10 billion of the funds made available by the bill would be used for United States military operations in Afghanistan.

"The intent is clear. It is time to bring U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan to a close and to bring our troops home.

"The war effort in Afghanistan is no longer serving its purpose of enhancing the security of the United States, which should be our goal. We were attacked on 9/11 by Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda had bases in Afghanistan; it made sense to go in and destroy those bases, and we did. We have every right, we have every duty, to destroy bases which are being used to plot attacks on the United States. But the CIA tells us that there are now fewer than one hundred Al Qaeda personnel in all of Afghanistan. It doesn't make sense to spend \$100 billion a year to destroy 100 Al Qaeda operatives.

"Congress and the American people helped greatly reduce U.S. involvement in Iraq. Through the elections in 2006 and 2008, we forced a new direction in Iraq and helped bring thousands of troops home. Now, we must do so again in Afghanistan.

"The intent of the amendment is to reduce the funding for Afghanistan to leave enough to provide for the safe and orderly withdrawal of our troops, but not for ongoing combat operations. The gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Wolf, earlier today said he would propose an amendment to establish a blue ribbon commission to examine our war effort and to ask the question of how best to fight the war. With all due respect, that is the wrong question. The right question - the first question - is: why do we need to fight this war at all?

"It is past time to admit that our legitimate purpose in Afghanistan - to destroy Al Qaeda bases - has long since been accomplished. But it is a fool's errand to try to remake a country that nobody since Genghis Khan has managed to conquer. What makes us think, what arrogance gives us the right to assume, that we can succeed where the Moguls, the British, the Soviets, failed. No government in Afghanistan, no government in Kabul, has ever been able to make its writ run in the entire country.

"Why have we undertaken to invent a government that is not supported by the majority of the people, that is corrupt, and to impose it on the country? Afghanistan is in the middle of what is, at this point, a 35 year civil war. We have no business intervening in that civil war, we have no ability to win it for one side or the other, and we have no necessity to win it for one side or the other. This whole idea of counter-insurgency, that we are going to persuade the people left alive after our firepower is applied, to love the government that we like, is absurd.

"It will take tens of years, hundreds of billions of dollars, tens of thousands of American lives if it can be done at all, and we don't need to do it. It's their country. If they want to have a civil war, we can't stop them. We can't choose the rulers that they have, we don't have to like the rulers that they have, we don't have to like their choices. It's not up to us.

"At this point, we must recognize that rebuilding Afghanistan is both beyond our ability, and beyond our mandate to prevent terrorists from attacking the United States.

"We are debating on this floor hundreds of budget cuts - cuts that will grievously hurt millions of Americans - in order to reduce our expenditures by less than \$100 billion. Yet we are throwing \$100 billion a year - plus countless lives - down a drainpipe, for no useful purpose at all, and with very little discussion of our purposes and whether or policy matches our purposes.

"To continue so bad a policy at so high a cost is quite simply unconscionable. It is unjustifiable to sacrifice more money and more lives this way, and I urge my colleagues to join me and Ms. Lee and Mr. Stark in voting to bring the U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan to a close.

"Vote for this amendment. Let's bring our troops home."

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